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ABSTRACT

Parkland College, in Illinois, has taken a proactive approach to responding to the multicultural and international challenges facing all community colleges. The action has been spurred by national indicators that suggest that the nation's workforce is becoming older, is being comprised of more female members, is including more members from traditionally minority groups, and will include jobs requiring higher skill levels. The college's approach was also based on a review of local conditions, including Parkland's mission and objectives and changing demographics of the community, students, and faculty and staff. The resulting initiative called for changes in the following areas: (1) school policies and procedures to eliminate exclusive policies; (2) school culture and the hidden curriculum (i.e., the underlying attitudes transmitted to students), resulting in the offering of diversity training for students, faculty, and staff; (3) the dominant learning styles at the college, resulting in an emphasis on developing cooperative teaching methods; (4) language and dialects of the school where faculty and staff are being trained to become more sensitive to different communication styles; (5) community participation and input, resulting in new community television programing; (6) counseling, with peer counselors now being trained to respond to diverse personal and academic concerns; (7) assessment and testing procedures and instructional materials to eliminate bias; (8) the general education curriculum courses to address issues of race, ethnicity, and gender; and (9) the attitudes of college staff to increase awareness of issues of cultural diversity. (KP)

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Multicultural and International Challenges to the Community College: A Model for College-Wide Proactive Response

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A few years ago I was having a discussion with a community college board member. This board member, who happened to be a middle-aged white male, and I had not really had a chance to develop our working relationship since I had only recently taken over the presidency of the college.

While I don't recall the exact topic of our conversation, I will never forget the sense of discomfort and uneasiness this man was experiencing. He looked at me and said, "You're so comfortable with me, but I don't have the skills to deal with you."

This was a successful business man, a community leader, an experienced and respected elected official. Yet he did not feel he had the skills with which to deal with an African-American woman.

His statement was so poignant and so powerful, I have never forgotten it.

We have since developed a wonderful working relationship built on mutual respect. I tell you this story today because it illustrates how desperately we, as community college educators, need to do our jobs.

We live in a diverse world. There are still too many people who do not have the skills to deal with the fact that their communities and the world they live in is, and will continue to be, multicultural.

As Pauline will explain later in the presentation, our institution, Parkland College, has taken a proactive approach to the multicultural and international challenges facing all community colleges. I would like to briefly examine a few of the major influences, particularly national influences, that prompted Parkland's proactive response.

First, Workforce 2000.

As I'm sure you are aware, Workforce 2000 was a research study conducted in 1987 by

the Hudson Institute at the request of the U.S. Department of Labor.

The study was prompted by then-President Reagan's challenge to all Americans, as spoken in his 1987 State of the Union Address: "We must enable our workers to adapt to the rapidly changing nature of the workplace." (Workforce 2000, p. vii).

Workforce 2000 predicted that "By the end of the next decade, the changes under way will produce an America that is in some ways unrecognizable from the one that existed only a few years ago." (Workforce 2000, p.xiii)

We find ourselves in the midst of those changes. As Workforce 2000 predicted, our workforce is becoming older, more female, and more disadvantaged. When the study was written in 1987, native white males represented 47 percent of new entrants into the labor force. By the end of the century, that percentage will shrink to only 15 percent. (p.xiii)

Another key trend predicted by Workforce 2000 was that new jobs will require much higher skill levels. We are certainly seeing more and more evidence of this as we find ourselves in the Information Age.

A third trend was that minorities would comprise the largest fraction of new additions to the workforce. Because of these trends, the study concluded, it is essential that our policymakers find ways to integrate minorities fully into the economy.

Now let's move to the next national influence, Business and Industries. To fully understand this influence, I would like to share one last statement from Workforce 2000:

"The cumulative impact of the changing ethnic and racial composition of the labor force will be dramatic. The small net growth of workers will be dominated by women, blacks, and immigrants... For companies that have previously hired mostly young white men, the years ahead will require major changes." (Workforce 2000, p.95).

In Champaign County, where Parkland is located, the minority population rose from 13.5 percent of the population in 1980 to 17 percent of the population in 1990. The District that we serve, however, is very rural, with few minorities.

Yet when you consider that by the year 2000, minorities will comprise one-third of our entire U.S. population, it becomes clear that we must do a better job of preparing all our students how to live and work in a diverse society.

By the year 2000, one out of three workers will be an ethnic minority and over 60 percent will be women.

In a workplace culture that has been dominated by white males, businesses are having to learn new ways of training employees, and how to create more inclusive work environments. Businesses understand the power of the "bottom line." They know that in order to stay competitive, they must have well-trained, productive workers.

Community colleges have always done a good job of training workers for business and industry. Productivity, however, does not only depend on how skillful one is at his or her job. The productivity of an organization depends, to a large part, on how people feel about their role within the organization. Do they feel welcome? Acknowledged? Respected? Included?

Many businesses are struggling with these questions. Community colleges must answer the call.

Ninety-six percent of community colleges are involved in some type of workforce training for employers in their communities. These training programs range from job-specific technical training, to TQM, to English as a Second Language. As we will suggest in our presentation, it is imperative that our colleges also provide diversity training for businesses.

Of course, we all are influenced by the changing demographics of community colleges. For example:

- Approximately 47 percent of all minorities in college attend community colleges.
- The average age of a community college student is 29.
- We are seeing an increase in part-time students -- older, working students who seek new skills to adapt to changes in the workplace.

• Community colleges are accessible to those who otherwise could not attain a college education. With the increases in numbers of minorities, it is logical to expect that minority enrollments will continue to grow at our institutions.

The next national influence that led to our responding to multicultural and international challenges was North Central's "Statement on Access, Equity, and Diversity," published in 1991. At that time, the policy was adopted, which read:

"The effectiveness of institutional policies and practices relating to equity of treatment of individuals, non-discrimination, affirmative action, and other means of enhancing access to education and the building of a diverse educational community will be evaluated."

In other words, the accreditation of our institutions was to some degree dependent on how well we created and maintained a learning and teaching environment that was supportive of diverse individuals and groups.

Another important influence on Parkland was the enactment in 1991 of Public Act 87-581. This Act, passed by the Illinois Legislature, requires each public institution of higher education in Illinois to include race, ethnicity, gender, and other issues related to improving human relations, in their general education requirements for obtaining a degree.

Finally, let me touch on the positive and powerful influence of AACC in terms of multicultural and international challenges to community colleges.

As you all know, AACC supports a system of councils so that the common interests of its diverse membership can be served.

• In 1973, the American Association of Women in Community Colleges (AAWCC) was formed and it has become one of the strongest voices for women in education.

• The American Council on International/Intercultural Education (ACIIE) was formed in 1990 to strengthen intercultural and international educational programs and to identify opportunities for international linkages.

• The National Community College Hispanic Council was established in 1985 and "is dedicated to quality education for Hispanic Americans, the enhancement of a pluralistic society, and the development of the nation's total human resources."

• The National Council on Black American Affairs, formed in 1972, has as its priorities: 1) professional development of Black leadership within colleges; 2) expansion of supportive services for low-income students; and 3) implementation of effective affirmative action programs.

Because of AACC's continued support, these councils can focus on the most meaningful issues for their members. With these councils, all voices can speak, all voices are listened to, and positive change occurs.

These are just a few of the powerful influences that have brought us here today. Now Pauline Kayes will tell you about the district and institutional influences on Parkland College ...

Pauline Kayes

Besides being aware of the national and international forces and mandates described by Dr. Harris, each community college can also: (1) analyze its own community and college demographics, (2) describe the specific influences that compel the college to meet multicultural and international challenges, and (3) evaluate the college's overall commitment to access, equity, and cultural diversity.

In undertaking these tasks, we discovered seven major reasons for addressing diversity at Parkland College in our district communities.

First, there are some key facts:

• **Changing communities.** In Champaign County, census figures suggest that by the year 2000, people of color will make up 22 percent of the population, compared to the current 12 percent. And although many of our outlying rural communities will remain relatively homogeneous, the

residents of these communities will likely seek work in larger nearby cities and towns where diversity is a daily fact of life.

• **Changing student populations.** In 1990, Parkland's total minority student population was just over 14 percent; in 1994, it was nearly 20 percent. From 1988 to 1994, the number of African-American students enrolling at Parkland has increased more than 73 percent while the enrollment of Latino students showed a 54 percent increase. In addition, 60 percent of our students are women, and that number is expected to increase to almost 70 percent by the year 2000.

• **Changing faculty and staff.** As the diversity of our students increase, our faculty and staff has remained primarily homogeneous. However, over 30 percent will be retiring by 2000, creating an excellent opportunity to diversify.

Next, there is what we say and/or promise about access, equity, and cultural diversity.

• **Mission and Purpose.** Six infinitive phrases that contain words like global awareness, appreciation of cultural diversity, and cultural development.

• **General Education Objectives.** Five objectives related to non-western values, sexual stereotyping, cross-racial knowledge.

• **Strategic Goals and Objectives.** Seven future goals related to recruiting a more diverse faculty, expanding multicultural students services, reforming and enhancing the curriculum, etc.

Finally, there is the connection between the **recruitment and retention of students of color and women** to institutional success, to state-wide reports, and to the college budget.

This complex mix of forces, influences, and mandates prompted Dr. Harris to appoint a college-wide Committee on Access, Equity, and Cultural Diversity in 1992 so we could begin to respond to multicultural issues and concerns holistically and proactively.

To begin our work, the committee wanted a "working definition" of multicultural education that encompassed the entire college and not just the classroom. We found that

definition in the writing of James Banks, a renowned expert in multicultural education:

"Multicultural education is (a process) designed to change the total educational environment so that students from diverse racial and ethnic groups, both gender groups, exceptional students, and students from each social class group will experience equal educational opportunities in schools, colleges, and universities."

We focused on the phrase "total school environment" -- and asked, what comprises the total school environment at Parkland?

According to Banks, the "total school environment" is a social system -- with norms, values, statuses, and goals like other social systems. In order to make recommendations for reform to Dr. Harris, we used Banks' analysis to understand how Parkland acts as a "social system" -- and, in thinking of the school as a social system, we realized that we must formulate and initiate a change strategy that reforms the total school environment.

What factors are involved in reforming the "total school environment"?

School policy and politics, school culture and hidden curriculum, learning styles of the school, languages and dialects of the school, community participation and input, counseling program, assessment and testing procedures, instructional materials, formalized curriculum and course of study, teaching styles and strategies, school staff.

According to Banks, any of these eleven areas may be the focus of initial school reform, but changes must take place in each of them to create and to sustain a multicultural student environment across the entire college.

We analyzed each of these factors at Parkland in order to recommend changes across the entire college.

(1) **School Policy and Procedures.** In this area, we asked -- Which policies are exclusive? Who gets the resources of the college? Are questions and issues of gender, race, and culture brought up by the entire college community or just a few individuals? Does the college fulfill its words and promises about access, equity, and cultural diversity?

To make Parkland's commitment to cultural diversity stronger and more publicly recognized, the Board of Trustees, the Student Government, and the College Faculty and Staff Association passed a Cultural Diversity Resolution, which hangs in the college center next to the Mission and Purposes Statement.

(2) **School Culture and the Hidden Curriculum.** Every school has both a manifest and a hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum has been defined as the one that no teacher explicitly teaches but that all students learn. It is the powerful part of school culture that communicates to students the school's attitudes toward males, female, and students from various religious, cultural, racial, ethnic, and sexual orientation groups.

Like students at most colleges and schools, students at Parkland tend to congregate in affinity groups based on gender, race, culture, age, and background. African-Americans here, Asian-Americans over there, and white students grouped by high schools. This is one aspect of our hidden curriculum that students witness everyday and challenges student services and activities to find ways for students to interact and to learn from one another so that the college can help all students develop more positive attitudes toward different groups. To this end, we have begun doing cultural diversity training with students.

(3) **Learning Styles of the School.** -- Schools in the United States are highly individualistic in both their learning and teaching styles and evaluation procedures. The dominant learning style at most schools is the lecture, where students learn from the teacher talking at them. Unfortunately, many students, particularly African-Americans, Latinos, American Indians, and women, are group-oriented so they experience problems in a highly individualistic learning environment.

Consequently, more and more of our professional development for faculty at Parkland is focusing on how to develop interactive, cooperative teaching methods to enhance the learning opportunities of women and culturally diverse students.

(4) **Language and Dialects of the School.** -- This is another aspect of the hidden

curriculum, which suggests that properly-spoken English in middle-class low tones is the only acceptable language. Even though more and more of our students have diverse verbal and non-verbal communication styles, we still assume a monocultural communication style in English.

At a recent staff meeting, for example, the head of the physical plant responded to comments about noise in the college center by saying "It's our new demographics," meaning, it is the black students who talk too loud and cause all the noise.

To help our faculty and staff become more sensitive and understanding of how different communication styles impact learning and our institutional climate, we have created a program of cultural diversity training, which includes a module on Communication Across Races and Cultures.

(5) **Community Participation and Input.** -- Here we examine how diverse communities perceive the college. We ask, does the African-American community, the Asian-American community, the women's community, the international community feel included at Parkland? Does the college provide an educational forum for their issues and concerns? Are we utilizing these diverse communities' resources to support students as mentors, role models?

Our initiative that we are quite proud of is our community television programming on women's and multicultural issues. Our video center produces a number of programs that are broadcast on our cable access channel and that feature local experts, activists, and representatives from the African-American, the Asian-American, and the women's community.

(6) **Counseling Program.** -- To respond to diverse students' personal and academic concerns, counselors and advisors need to be sensitive, aware, and knowledgeable so they avoid counseling and advising out of bias, preconception, and stereotype.

For example, we have had counselors who told both male and female students not to waste their time taking women's studies courses while telling white students that Black Literature is for black students only. Again, in-service training with counselors is essential to avoid these embarrassments. Recently, gay and lesbian students and faculty, upset with the way counselors

were avoiding counseling gay and lesbian students, held an in-service workshop for counselors to help them understand the impact of their homophobic treatment. Another strategy for ensuring multicultural counseling support is peer counseling.

(7) **Assessment and Testing Procedures** -- This applies to both the assessment and testing of students as well as the evaluation and assessment of faculty. In assessing and testing students, we must make sure that we are not using culturally or racially or gender biased procedures or tests. Research has shown that a disproportionate number of Black and Hispanic students are labeled "mentally retarded" or "slow learners" because the testing procedures used in intelligence tests reflect the abilities and skills valued by American core culture, which is predominantly White, Anglo-Saxon, and middle-class.

In assessing faculty, it is imperative that we provide students questions on instructor evaluations that can provide feedback on whether or not the instructor is including perspectives of women, people of color, and/or minority groups in the course content, encouraging students' full participation in the course, regardless of gender, race, class, culture, or sexual orientation, and actively encouraging students to understand and to respect each other's gender, racial, and cultural differences.

(8) **Instructional Materials**. -- Just as different racial, ethnic, and gender groups have different learning styles, they also respond differently according to instructional materials. Traditionally, books and other written materials have been the primary instructional materials, but many students become more engaged in learning through other materials that are more directly connected to their diverse experiences -- like performances, music, art, poetry readings, films, field trips, lectures -- that occur outside the classroom. In our faculty development efforts, we need to help faculty experiment with a variety of instructional materials that go beyond the classroom, so they aren't so tied to the traditional classroom and to traditional ways of "covering the material."

(9) **Formalized Curriculum and Course of Study.** -- What is studied? Who is the

subject of the course content? From whose perspective do we study the subject, the course content? Does the formalized curriculum ensure that knowledge about gender, race, culture is included in all courses and not just set aside in women's studies, African-American studies, or Latina studies?

It's hard to justify holding onto a canon of knowledge dominated primarily by white males as the subjects and the producers of knowledge when the students sitting in our classes, especially in community colleges, are primarily female and more and more students of color.

In Illinois the state legislature was so concerned about this issue that they passed a law requiring the general education curriculum to provide courses to address issues of race, ethnicity, and gender. Unfortunately, they did not allocate the money necessary to fund faculty development in gender-balanced, multicultural education to make such curriculum reform a reality, so we are having to become particularly resourceful in making this kind of faculty development possible in Illinois community colleges.

(10) **Teaching Styles and Strategies.** -- If we, as teachers, become more familiar with the diverse learning styles of our culturally and racially diverse students, we will have important clues about how to adapt and change our teaching styles and strategies.

For example, in a major study of women's ways of knowing, Mary Belenkey and her colleagues found that most women interviewed in their study considered personalized knowledge and knowledge that resulted from first hand observation most appealing. However, most of our educational institutions emphasize abstract "out-of-context" knowledge. Other researchers have found that African-American and Latina students also respond more positively to personalized and humanized knowledge than to abstract knowledge.

(11) Finally, there are the attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of school staff. Since most students interact with staff in financial aid, admissions, the library, the career center, etc., it is imperative that staff realize their role in creating an inclusive institutional climate.

For years, December at Parkland has been marked by Christmas decorations put up all

over the college and even sponsored by areas like Admissions, Financial Aid, and the Library. This year, however, we asked how would our Jewish or Islamic students feel about being in the middle of college-sponsored Christmas decorations.

To foster this kind of sensitivity to cultural differences in our staff, we are asking them to participate in college-wide diversity training. Hopefully, next December, we will see decorating for Hanukkah and Kwanza and Ramadan as well as Christmas.

In three short years, the committee on Access, Equity, and Cultural Diversity has helped the college to go beyond reacting to multicultural challenges in a fragmented, disconnected way because (1) we are a college-wide committee of 25 representing all personnel levels (administrators, faculty, non-academics, and professional support) and include key leaders in international, intercultural, and multicultural education; (2) we regularly recommend longterm objectives and goals and a short-term action plan to Dr. Harris as a result of our holistic assessment and evaluation process.

What makes the Committee on Access, Equity, and Cultural Diversity unique is that we are an activist committee, sponsoring programs, resolutions, cultural events, and conferences, like the first statewide conference on gender-balanced, multicultural education for Illinois secondary schools and community colleges which attracted over 500 people in 1993.

We are a catalyst committee, encouraging and assisting areas of the college in professional development activities, like a recent teleconference on Retention Strategies for Diversity.

We are an educational committee, educating the college and the community about cultural diversity, even creating five modules of cultural diversity training for local businesses.

We are a committee making connections, with other colleagues, with students, with the community, and with other Illinois community colleges and secondary schools. As a result, Parkland was one of twelve community colleges nationally to receive a Ford Foundation grant to assist 20 community college faculty from Illinois in transforming humanities and social science courses.

Because of the committee's advocacy and activism, Parkland is now known as a leader in access, equity, and cultural diversity in the community and in the state.

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